

Executive Registry

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Honorable John L. McClellan  
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In your letter of 5 February 1974 you asked for my views on proposals made by Senator William Proxmire in a letter to you dated 30 January 1974 that the Intelligence Operations Subcommittee release an aggregate figure broken down by agency which indicates the total amount spent on intelligence by the U. S. yearly.

Senator Proxmire goes on to say he agrees that the release of manpower statistics and budgetary information that indicates the relative priorities of the intelligence community cannot be permitted. His basic purpose is to show to the American public the rough apportionment of intelligence dollars to defense and civilian agencies while fully protecting intelligence programs.

You will recall that on 27 July 1973 I responded to a similar request from you regarding the disclosure of the budget figures for the National Intelligence Program which I presented to the Subcommittee on 11 July 1973. I believe the considerations which I outlined in that letter still apply. I stated my view that disclosure of the total figure would not in and of itself present a security problem. I went on to explain, however, that I felt it would establish a precedent for the disclosure of this figure annually. If this were to occur, the annual fluctuations in our total intelligence effort would be revealed and it would not be in the national interest to disclose that kind of information to foreign nations.

I pointed out that such disclosure of total figures for all programs would reveal considerable information about the distribution of our intelligence resources among different types of intelligence activity and an annual update of those figures would provide insights into the changes and trends in our intelligence programs which could be damaging to intelligence sources and methods.

I am still concerned that public disclosure of total intelligence figures on an annual basis would lead to pressures for further public explanation of the programs for which the monies were appropriated. In my judgment this is the very kind of information which Senator Proxmire has indicated in his letter to you should not be released.

I feel that the final determination of how information on these funds should be handled within the Congress is a matter for the Congress to decide. I feel quite strongly, however, that because of the responsibility placed upon me by the Congress in the National Security Act of 1947 for the protection of intelligence sources and methods, I could not authorize the release of the figures which Senator Proxmire has proposed.

Sincerely,

/s/ W. E. Colby

W. E. Colby  
Director

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